

minimize the preponderance and consequent influence of any one vat on the characteristics of the finished product, and to promote as much uniformity as is practical. In blending also consider the final composition requirements for fat and moisture. Quantities of salt, color, emulsifier and other allowable ingredients to be added shall be calculated and predetermined for each cooker batch.

§ 58.725 Trimming and cleaning.

The natural cheese shall be cleaned free of all non-edible portions. Paraffin and bandages as well as rind surface, mold or unclean areas or any other part which is unwholesome or unappetizing shall be removed.

§ 58.726 Cutting and grinding.

The trimmed and cleaned cheese should be cut into sections of convenient size to be handled by the grinder or shredder. The grinding and mixing of the blended lots of cheese should be done in such a manner as to insure a homogeneous mixture throughout the batch.

§ 58.727 Adding optional ingredients.

As each batch is added to the cooker, the predetermined amounts of salt, emulsifiers, color, or other allowable optional ingredients shall be added. However, a special blending vat may be used to mix the ground cheese and other ingredients before they enter the cooker to provide composition control.

§ 58.728 Cooking the batch.

Each batch of cheese within the cooker, including the optional ingredients, shall be thoroughly commingled and the contents pasteurized at a temperature of at least 158 °F. and held at that temperature for not less than 30 seconds or any other equally effective combination of time and temperature approved by the Administrator. Care shall be taken to prevent the entrance of cheese particles or ingredients after the cooker batch of cheese has reached the final heating temperature. After holding for the required period of time, the hot cheese shall be emptied from the cooker as quickly as possible.

§ 58.729 Forming containers.

Containers either lined or unlined shall be assembled and stored in a sanitary manner to prevent contamination. The handling of containers by filler crews should be done with extreme care and observance of personal cleanliness. Preforming and assembling of pouch liners and containers shall be kept to a minimum and the supply rotated to limit the length of time exposed to possible contamination prior to filling.

§ 58.730 Filling containers.

Hot fluid cheese from the cookers may be held in hotwells or hoppers to assure a constant and even supply of processed cheese to the filler or slice former. Filler valves shall effectively measure the desired amount of product into the pouch or container in a sanitary manner and shall cut off sharply without drip or drag of cheese across the opening. An effective system shall be used to maintain accurate and precise weight control. Damaged or unsatisfactory packages shall be removed from production, and the cheese may be salvaged into sanitary containers, and added back to cookers.

§ 58.731 Closing and sealing containers.

Pouches, liners, or containers having product contact surfaces, after filling shall be folded or closed and sealed in a sanitary manner, preferably by mechanical means, so as to assure against contamination. Each container in addition to other required labeling shall be coded in such a manner as to be easily identified as to date of manufacture by lot or subplot number.

§ 58.732 Cooling the packaged cheese.

After the containers are filled they shall be stacked, or cased and stacked in such a manner as to prevent breaking of seals due to excessive bulging and to allow immediate progressive cooling of the individual containers of cheese. As a minimum the cheese should be cooled to a temperature of 100 °F. or lower within 24 hours after filling. The temperature of the cheese should be reduced further, before being shipped or if storage is intended.